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FROM STAFF & WIRE REPORTS

YOU’VE READ EVERY travel guide and food blog on the web. You’ve plotted out a meal-by-meal itinerary. You’ve even packed your stretchiest pants. Now it’s time to forget everything you’ve heard about the Maine food scene. If you’re looking for real local flavor, you’ll find it just as easily off the beaten track—and you won’t need to wait as long for a table. Remember—with over 300 restaurants in Greater Portland alone, you’ll need to plan a lifetime of vacations to experience the real taste of Maine. What a delicious challenge!

LOBSTER TALES

First things first: the headline act. It’s no secret that Maine lobster has secured an international reputation as an affordable

luxury in recent years. From Italy to China, chefs are creating inventive new ways to serve Maine’s prime export. But in Vacationland, you can’t beat the classic lobster roll. If you have an entire afternoon to spare, you can try your luck in the lines that snake along the sidewalk to that oh-so-hyped seafood joint on Middle Street in pursuit of the much lauded, award-winning Brown Butter Lobster Roll™. But if you want to mingle with tourists and Main-

Nothing will single you out as a greenhorn faster than ordering a 3-pound lobster.

Nunan’s in Cape Porpoise serves lobster, steamers, and blueberry pie. Occasionally a salad. But there’s a magic here.



ers alike (who know to visit such places only during winter months), drive instead to **The Lobster Shack** at Two Lights Park or to **Red’s Eats** in Wiscasset. Both draw sizable crowds, but counter service ensures you’ll be rewarded quickly with a fluffy white roll that’s perfectly toasted and laden with tender, fresh lobster meat. At The Lobster Shack, you won’t regret indulging in an extra basket of fried whole-belly clams to munch as you watch the surf roll onto the granite shelf of shoreline beyond the pic-



nic tables. Red's owner Deborah Gagnon is known for piling over a lobster's worth of meat into each roll she serves, so skip the sides here.

Or (and this is so Mainer-like), go *across the street* in Wiscasset to **Sprague's**, where the lobster rolls are fantastic, there's a better view, and there's better parking.

Yes, parking is a factor. That's just one of many reasons why locals will always love **DiMillo's Floating Restaurant**. The seafood is great (try the fried lobster), and when they open up the upper decks during the summer, the views are unbelievable. Not to mention, this place is legendary for continuing to serve diners during *The Perfect Storm* of 1991. This boat knows how to handle the waves in style.

Heading south, the **Colony Hotel and Resort**, **Arundel Wharf Restaurant**, and **Mabel's Lobster Claw** are beyond just trustworthy—they're essential summer destinations. The Colony is the ultimate Kennebunkport experience—and locals love the views that are so beautiful they stop time. The inside local track is to enjoy the shore dinners they serve on Friday nights and the poolside brunches they offer from July through December.



Feast of the senses: Live music, lobster bakes, and Portland Harbor surrounding you add up to the drawing card for local favorite Portland Lobster Company.

Arundel Wharf is right on the Kennebunk River and a local favorite for decades. (Side note: They serve unmatched swordfish). Stepping through the door to Mabel's Lobster Claw is like taking a trip back in time. The dining room is virtually unchanged since its launch by Teedy Hutchins in 1952. Robert and Stephanie Fischer took over in 1996 and last year saw 50,000 visitors pass through their tiny eatery. "We have the same booths made from the same knotty pine since

this place opened. We even play the same music! A lot of the restaurants around here have moved away from the classic Maine fare. They've started doing something fancier, more exotic. Mabel's has stuck with the same menu for the past 70 years: steamers, clams, lobster—the classics. We've been smart enough or fortunate enough that it's worked! It's what people want."

Barnacle Billy's is a summer staple for tourists, locals, and a blur of celebrities. Billy's son Tim tells us that over 50 famous faces have graced the Ogunquit institution for a bite of its lobster roll, including Tom Brady and Christian Bale.

Want to be master of your own kitchen? **Bayley's Lobster Pound** in Scarborough has been selling the freshest seafood for 102 years. The seafront store is still owned and operated by the Bayley family. "We've sold over 30 million pounds of lobster in our time!" Talk about a family leg-



Tony's Donut Shop on 9 Bolton Street has been running "for 65 years, since the early 1950s." Their breakout business secret: Serve the best molasses donuts in the universe.

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TOP SECRET



acy. You know your takeout attraction is popular when you've been known to offer valet parking!

Trenton Bridge Pound may have only six decades of family-owned operations under its belt, but you can still rely on the Gascon family for fresh local seafood. You literally can't miss this roadside lobster party on the Bar Harbor Road. The rookie mistake when ordering lobster from these establishments is assuming bigger means better. Nothing will single you out as a greenhorn faster than pointing to a 3-pound beast. Smaller means sweeter, so choose nothing bigger than 1.25 pounds. Impress the lobster pound employees by knowingly requesting a "chicken" lobster (only 1 lb.).

There's more! The shady deck at **Harraseeket Lunch & Lobster Company** provides a dreamy setting to enjoy a fresh lobster dinner. Serving Maine seafood since 1970, Harraseeket Lunch is an essential summer staple in South Freeport—so much so that it's even been celebrated on *The Rachel Ray Show* and ABC's *The Chew*.

There's a price for lobster's surging world celebrity—and we're talking about dollars and cents. The upsurge in demand in recent years pushed market prices to an 11-year high last year, according to *The Financial Times*. Following a cold winter and a slow start to the season, expect to shell out a little extra for your lobster rolls this summer.

KEEPIN' IT CRUSTACEAN

Heading north, the humble crab roll is rather overshadowed by its more famous cousin. Jonah and Peekytoe crab, typically considered to be 'bait-stealing by-catch' by Maine lobstermen, are growing in popularity in southern New England as a tasty alternative to lobster. Is there room for another star crustacean on Maine's menus? Debatable. But if you're feeling adventur-



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ous, **Town Landing Market** in Falmouth will present you with a deliciously succulent pile of fresh crab meat to silence even the most resolute lobster purists.

LATE RISER

In 2014, *The Washington Post* described brunch as “the most delicious—and divisive—meal in America,” citing the generation gap and cultural snobbery as factors in the respective delight and derision felt toward the fashionable ‘new’ mealtime since diners started ‘discovering’ it again. Politics aside, Maine has a wealth of eating options to kick-start your day. Loyal locals flock to the diminutive **Palace Diner** in Biddeford for some of the best fried chicken and French toast around, served inside a re-claimed chrome train car. News that owner Chad Conley will soon open **Rose Foods**, a bagel shop and Jewish-style deli in the former site of Brealu Cafe on Forest Avenue, has Portland foodies buzzing. Impress or irritate your local friends by visiting the deli before they do this summer.

Just a short walk from Monument Square, **Isa Bistro** is easily overlooked for its location on Portland Street, one of the roads less traveled by tourists in the city. The black-and-white floor tiling and scattered bistro tables lend Isa a cosmopolitan European feel, though the menu is diverse and seasonal, inspired by chef Isaul Perez’s mix of French and Italian training and Mexican heritage. Book a table for Saturday morning and enjoy a plate of zesty huevos rancheros with a steaming cup of Tandem coffee. Once the bill is paid, you’re only a

Saveur Magazine provides one kind of insight, but sometimes it’s good to follow local subcontractors to see what’s great for lunch. Pictured: Benny’s on Commercial Street.



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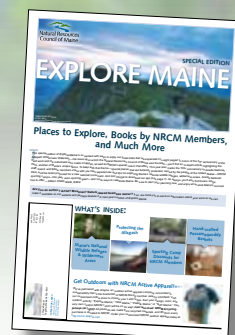
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short stroll from the Deering Oaks Farmers' Market with its many laden tables of produce, preserves, and flowers.

If you don't subscribe to the latte and avocado-toast aesthetic, **Q Street Diner** in South Portland does a bustling trade in eggs and pancakes in a welcoming, no-frills dining room that attracts a steady stream of regulars. Even those who don't "do" brunch will be placated.

LITTLE ITALY

Subs, hoagies, heroes, grinders, or spuckies—what's in a name? All you need to know is that the wonderful "Italian sandwich" traces its roots back to none other than Portland, Maine. The Italian-American classic came to life in 1902 at the hands of Giovanni Amato, who began slicing "submarine" rolls lengthways to be stuffed with cured meats, cheese, vegetables, dill pickles, and a drizzle of olive oil to satiate the appetites of hungry dockworkers. His legacy is scattered throughout New England in the form of the **Amato's** franchises. We recommend you visit



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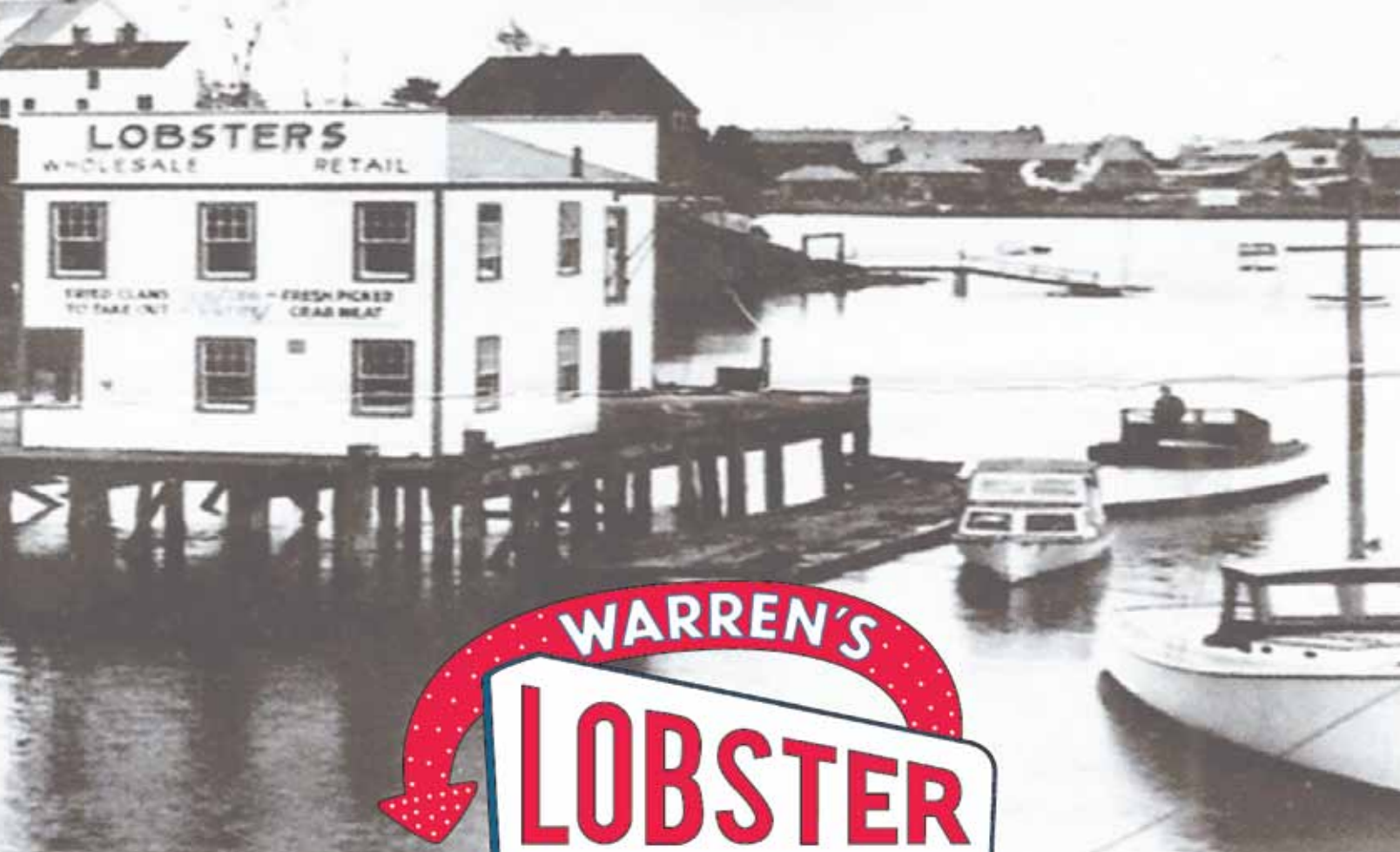
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TOP SECRET

the Scarborough branch before you settle into the sand of Scarborough Beach State Park, where lunch options are limited. By the way, if it's not wrapped in wax paper, it's not an Italian sandwich.

Though a Neapolitan will tell you it's nobody's Margherita pizza from Naples, some Forest City locals feel the Sicilian slice at **Micucci's Grocery** on India Street is perhaps Portland's greatest homage to Italian decadence. Originally created by local chef Stephen Lanzalotta (who later took his recipe and opened Slab on Preble Street), bite into the fluffy pillow of dough that comes smothered in sweet tomato sauce and molten mozzarella, the Micucci slice is the ideal pie to pick up before you hop on the Casco Bay Lines ferry to Peaks Island. "I usually order two," a friend confesses. Just beware the envious glances from fellow passengers.

HIDDEN IN PLAIN SIGHT

In a city as overflowing with great food as Portland, certain long-established gems can slide under the radar in "Best Of" lists. Case in point: **Yosaku** on Danforth Street,



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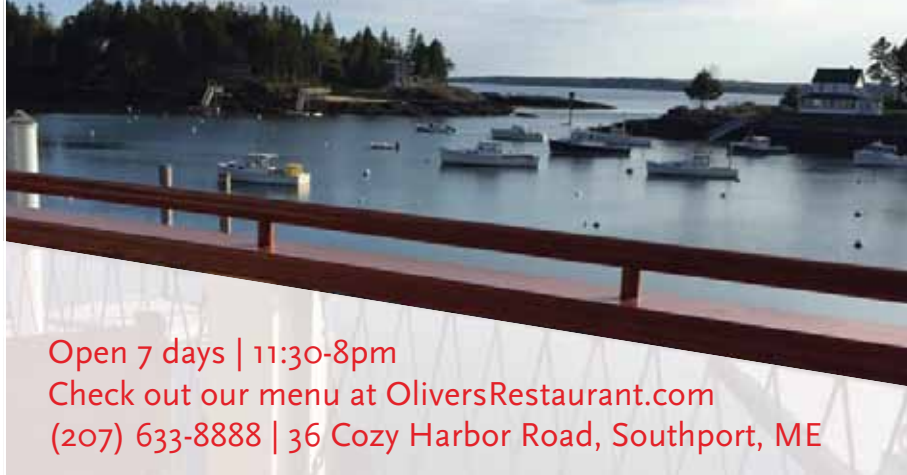
TOP SECRET

a place that's endeared itself to actress Anna Kendrick, your typical Portland local. She's told us she doesn't consider it a return visit to Portland unless she stops here. During the summer, the spacious patio—complete with Japanese garden and burbling fountain—is a romantic spot for masterfully presented sushi. Executive chef and owner Takahiro Sato is Portland's first sushi chef and a master of his craft. Order the Maine Roll and marvel at the artful fusion of east-meets-west as dainty maki rolls arrive with a lobster claw peeking out among the julienned vegetables.

Above Pat's Meat Market on Stevens Avenue, **The Treehouse Café** serves the Deering neighborhoods a decadent dinner menu in a magical setting. The second-floor eatery earns its name from the cozy rear deck covered by a canopy of tree branches and strings of colored lights. You'll find the woodsy fairy tale continued inside, where wooden interiors, leafy accents, and more twinkling lights set the mood for a tasty blend of fancy pub food and affordable wines. ■



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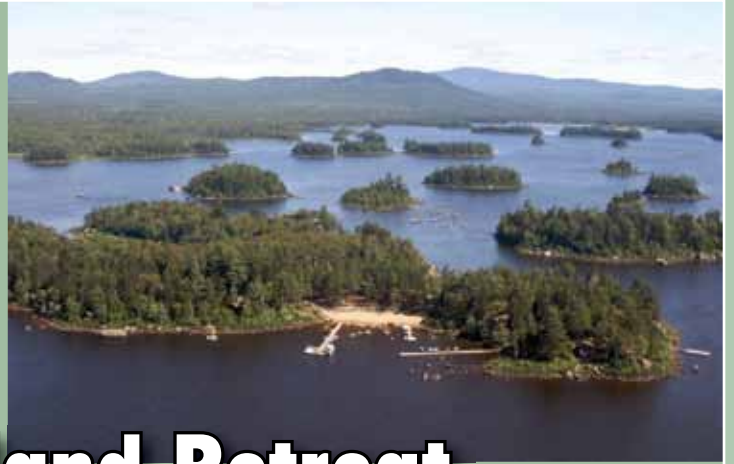
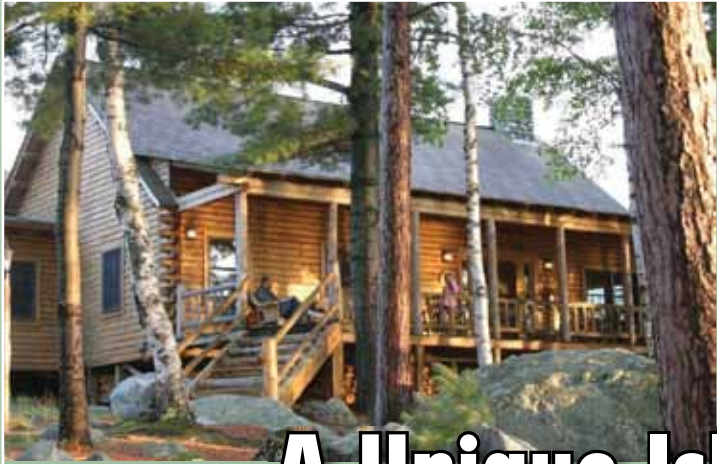
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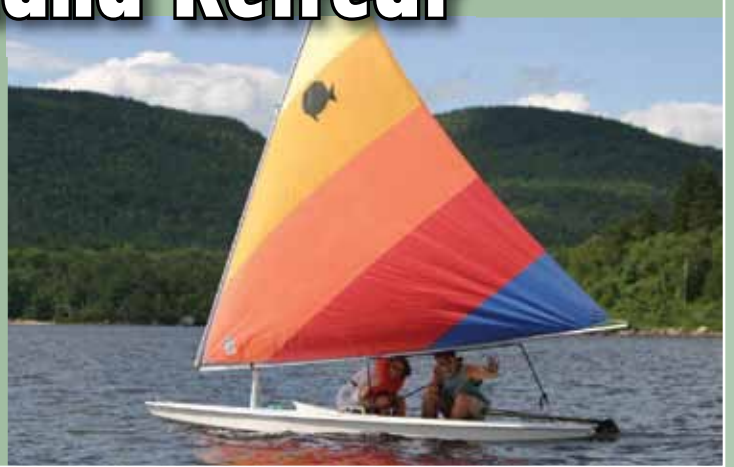
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